



Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Students with a disability are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Schools must provide a FAPE through programs and services. The FAPE must meet the student's unique needs and provide an educational benefit.

To provide a FAPE, schools must:

- Create an individualized education program (IEP) for your child, which is a written plan for your child's education at school.
- Provide special education services that meet your child's specific (or unique) needs.
- Provide related services so your child can benefit from special education. An example of related services is receiving occupational therapy.
- Provide [accommodations and modifications](#) so your child can be in general education settings.
- Provide access to the same non-academic and extracurricular activities as peers without disabilities.
- Educate your child in the [least restrictive environment \(LRE\)](#), which means your child should be educated as much as possible in the general education classroom with peers that are not disabled. Spending time outside the general education classroom is only allowed if it is needed to meet your child's specific needs.

Schools are not required to:

- Provide services that are superior to what other students receive.
- Provide programming based only on parents' requests, such as the supports and services their child will receive. These are decisions made by the IEP team, which includes the parent.
- Provide preferred treatment in belonging to clubs or playing sports. However, students are entitled to the same opportunity as others to be involved.

What to do if you believe your child is not receiving a FAPE

Discuss it first with your child's IEP team. If you are still not satisfied, contact the following in the order given to see if you can come to agreement:

- Special education administrator
- Superintendent
- Intermediate School District

• If you are still not satisfied, you can pursue [mediation](#), a [due process complaint](#), or file a [state complaint](#).

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1-888-320-8384
(OSE information line)


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Family Matters fact sheets are intended to enhance public understanding of Michigan's special education system and are not a substitute for official laws and regulations.



FREE

- Special education and related services are provided by public schools at no cost to parents.
- Schools cannot deny a FAPE due to the cost of services.
- Schools can charge fees if children without disabilities are charged the same fees.

APPROPRIATE

- Students are entitled to an education that meets their needs.
- The individualized education program (IEP) provides information about how your child's education is personalized to meet his or her needs.
- The IEP outlines how the special education programs and related services are provided.
- The IEP lists your child's educational goals.

PUBLIC

- Children receiving special education programs and related services have a right to receive an education provided by the public school system.

EDUCATION

- The education provided must meet state standards and federal standards defined in the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA).
- Every child who is eligible for special education has a right to an education.
- The education should prepare all children for their future including postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.

Resources



[Inclusion: FAPE in the LRE](#)
[A Michigan Alliance for Families Webinar](#)

- [Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\): Defining and Understanding FAPE](#)
- [Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education \(MARSE\)](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education — Free Appropriate Public Education for Students With Disabilities: Requirements Under Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)